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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 04/30/08

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- (1) No option for plan revision: Maher

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 2) (Full)  
April 30, 2008

Okinawa Prefecture and the government have been facing difficulties in their negotiations over where to build an alternative facility for Futenma airfield. The Okinawa Times interviewed U.S. Consul

General in Okinawa Kevin Maher about the U.S. government's view. Maher took part in the intergovernmental agreement on the planned realignment of U.S. forces in Japan as security affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy in Japan,

-- It has been two years since the Japanese and U.S. governments finalized their realignment agreement.

Maher: Politically, Okinawa Prefecture and Nago City differ with the government. Specifically, however, an environmental impact assessment has also started and is now well under way. I believe that the construction of an alternative facility can be completed by 2014. We must not forget that the agreement has two purposes. One is transformation, and the other is realignment. We need to alleviate Okinawa's burden and improve the capability of our bilateral alliance at the same time. It (change) is under way with the deployment of PAC-3 batteries (in Okinawa), the joint use of bases with the Self-Defense Force, and the relocation of Kadena-based fighter jets' flight training missions. This has been fairly successful. At the same time, we have to relocate Futenma airfield and alleviate Okinawa's burden as soon as possible.

-- Okinawa Prefecture has been insisting on offshore relocation.

Maher: The Japanese government coordinated with local communities on its plan to build a V-shaped pair of airstrips, and then the Japanese government proposed the plan. The U.S. government has accepted the proposal. I took part in the talks until the end. However, we agreed on the plan because the Japanese government listened to local communities and came up with a well-balanced plan that gives consideration to the environment. Coordination is over now, and we entered the phase of implementation two years ago. The environmental assessment cannot be the reason for offshore

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relocation. That is because there would be more landfill then and that would have a major impact on the environment. The two options are whether to implement or not implement the plan. Revising the plan is not an option.

-- There is still no explanation to local communities about the scale of Camp Zukeran's reversion.

Maher: We have yet to announce this officially. However, there is no problem about returning an area on the east side of Route 58. Further reversion is linked to Guam, so we are now coordinating on the housing area. But I can say we can expect large-scale reversion. We will focus on Futenma and Guam first, and then on the bases south of Kadena in the next phase.

(2) U.S. military to return Camp Zukeran's industrial area along Rt. 58: Maher

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 1) (Full)  
April 30, 2008

Along with the planned realignment of U.S. forces in Japan, the United States has agreed with Japan to return a partial area of the U.S. Marine Corps' Camp Zukeran (Camp Foster) in Okinawa Prefecture, U.S. Consul General in Okinawa Kevin Maher told the Okinawa Times in an interview yesterday. The area is on the premises of Camp Zukeran, which covers a total area of about 640 hectares, and is situated along Route 58, straddling Chatan Town and Ginowan City. On May 1 two years ago, Japan and the United States finalized their plan (roadmap) for the U.S. force realignment in Japan. However, this is the first time that a U.S. government official has revealed a specific area of Camp Zukeran to be returned. The area is about 100 hectares.

"There is no problem about (returning) the industrial area that is situated along Route 58," Maher said. Japan has asked the United States to return more than 320 hectares. However, Maher said: "This is linked to the Guam relocation, so we're now adjusting the needs for family housing for those remaining in Okinawa. I think it is possible to expect large-scale reversion."

Camp Zukeran is one of the six U.S. military bases located south of the Kadena base incorporated in the roadmap. This is the only case in which the scale of reversion has yet to be determined. The area on the east side of Route 58 is an industrial area with warehouses and motor pools.

Meanwhile, Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima has been calling on the U.S. military to close down Futenma airfield within three years. "We need to maintain (the airfield's current) capability (until the construction of an alternative facility is completed," Maher said, "so we can't do it within three years." He added, "We will have to relocate the airfield at an early date in order to resolve the concerns of local residents in the vicinity of Futenma airfield."

(3) MOD to reconsider golfing facilities available to SDF personnel at low fees

SANKEI (Top play) (Full)  
April 29, 2008

It became clear on April 28 from a fact-finding survey by the

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Ministry of Defense (MOD) that there are 11 golfing facilities available to Self-Defense Forces (SDF) personnel and related officials free or at low rates. Those facilities are located inside SDF bases across the country. It was not publicly known until now that the SDF have those golfing facilities. Although MOD is toughening discipline among its personnel in the wake of a series of scandals and accidents involving the organization, one senior SDF officer pointed out: "We need to reconsider those golfing facilities in order to restore public confidence." Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba instructed the staff to discuss what to do about the golf courses.

According to MOD, the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) has one golfing facility at Camp Kisarazu (in Chiba Prefecture). The Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) has two courses, including one at Shimofusa Air Base (in Chiba Prefecture). The Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) has eight courses, including one at Iruma Air Base (in Saitama Prefecture).

Most golfing facilities have been constructed on safely secured grassy areas near airfields and anti-aircraft training ranges. The facilities were constructed for the purpose of helping SDF personnel build up their physical strength and effectively use their spare time. The largest facilities are located at the ASDF Iruma Base and the GSDF Kisarazu Base. They are equipped with a teeing-off area, bunkers, and greens with 11 holes and 9 holes, respectively.

Most facilities are available only to SDF personnel and ex-SDF personnel, but some ranges are available also to their family members and friends. Most courses are free and some courses operate under a membership system (a monthly membership fee ranges from 1,000 yen to 3,000 yen). Those ranges are operated and managed by SDF personnel with maintenance of the ranges and mowing handled by SDF personnel. Reportedly SDF personnel use those ranges when they are off duty, on Saturdays and Sundays, or on national holidays.

MOD says, "Legally, there is no problem about using security sites as golf facilities." But residents in the vicinities have not been informed of the existence of those courses. At some bases, the facilities are concealed by surrounding trees and are called "special training grounds."

A senior MOD officer, casting doubts on continuing the existence of such facilities, noted, "Bases and other facilities are constructed on state-owned land. Those golfing facilities are available at lower fees than general golf courses. I wonder if it is a good thing to keep them open, since we have to restore the public confidence we've lost owing to a spate of scandals and accidents."

Defense Minister Ishiba, who is energetically advancing reform of the ministry, also has instructed concerned bureaus to consider what to do about the on-base golfing facilities. Measures being considered at present include scrapping all golf courses or making

them available to citizens under certain conditions.

(4) Reporters' monthly report: Prime Minister Fukuda makes careless remarks, seems to be tired

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Slightly abridged)  
April 30, 2008

With the defeat of the candidate of his party, the ruling Liberal

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Democratic Party (LDP), in Sunday's Lower House by-election in the Yamaguchi No. 2 constituency, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda will find it increasingly difficult to steer his administration. The support rate for the Fukuda cabinet has now dropped to below 30 PERCENT, entering a danger zone (historically for prime ministers). Moreover, the prime minister has recently made some remarks that reporters assigned to cover him feel are controversial.

On April 20 when Fukuda visited Yamaguchi Prefecture to support the LDP candidate running for the Lower House by-election, he said: "The purpose of the health-care system this time around is to let (the elderly) shoulder a little (of the cost of medical insurance premiums)."

Fukuda might have tried to explain (the health-care system) to make it understandable, but his speech appeared to have lacked consideration to those voters concerned about the situation. Sure enough, people there listening to his speech fell quiet, as one would expect.

The prime minister hosted a cherry blossom party at Shinjuku-Gyoen on April 12. There, he made a remark that raised eyebrows.

Before approximately 10,000 guests, including politicians, business leaders, and celebrities, Fukuda said: "There are many kinds of issues, such as rising prices. But we such can't be helped. It is important for us to withstand and overcome them."

A senior ruling coalition member made this candid comment about his remark that rising prices could not be helped: "It is a politician's role to resolve such issues."

With the prime minister frequently coming out with such careless remarks, one could assume that he may be getting tired.

Until April 28, Fukuda took only one day off in the month. In addition to stumping for the LDP candidate running in the Lower House by-election, and a visit to Hokkaido, Fukuda made a trip to Russia. In addition, Foreign Ministry officials often call on him at the Prime Minister's Official Residence. A person close to the prime minister said that Fukuda was really tired, but still, his making careless remarks just will not do.

(5) Editorial: Inclusion of spinal columns in U.S. beef shipment; Regrettable, but need to deal with incident in cool-headed manner

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 30, 2008

Spinal columns, one of the materials that must be removed from U.S. beef coming into Japan, have been found in a shipment less than two years since U.S. beef imports were resumed. We must say that the incident is extremely regrettable.

However, what happened this time appears to have been caused by a simple mistake with the meatpacker putting beef destined for the U.S. market into a box bound for Japan.

A similar incident occurred two and a half years ago. However, structural problems, such as that meat-processing plants and inspectors not being familiar with Japan-bound export standards, were behind that incident. It must be taken into account that the

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cause of the incident this time is different from that of the past incident in terms of seriousness.

Though the specified risk material (SRM) was found in only one out of 700 boxes (totaling 17 tons) shipped to Japan by the meatpacker in question, all boxes were immediately disposed of. Following the incident, the government has strengthened the quarantine system. It has also placed a total ban on imports of beef from that plant for the time being. More importantly, it was fortunate that the meat was not put on the table.

It is only natural that even though the incident was caused by a simple mistake, Japan strongly called on the U.S. to find the cause of the incident and take measures to prevent a recurrence. An emotional reaction will not solve anything. We must make sure that we always need to tackle the BSE issue, based on scientific grounds in a cool-headed manner.

A total ban was placed on imports of U.S. beef, when a BSE-infected cow was for the first time discovered in the U.S. in late 2003. In resuming U.S. beef imports, Japan and the U.S. agreed that only beef obtained from cattle 20 months of age or younger is eligible for exports and that SRM, such as spinal columns and brains, where agents causing BSE tend to accumulate, must be removed completely.

The discovery of spinal columns in the previous incident occurred immediately after the resumption. An embargo was placed again, which had been in place until imports were resumed in July 2006.

Experts are divided in their views of Japan's beef safety standards. Beef-exporting countries are critical of Japan's standards as being too strict, compared with international standards. Japan's restaurant industry has also sought that the age criterion be eased to match the international standard of 30 months or younger.

Talks between Tokyo and Washington are continuing on the easing of Japan's import standards. Chances are that reaching a settlement could be put off due to the incident this time.

Many observers are of the opinion that Japan is the strictest in the world in terms of food safety. It is not easy to regain consumer trust once it is lost. It is necessary for the U.S. to seriously reflect on its repeated violations of the agreement. If it does not take the incident seriously as having been caused by a simple mistake, Japanese consumers might completely turn their backs on U.S. beef for the last time.

(6) Africa begins to walk on its own

SANKEI (Page 1) (Slightly abridged)  
April 30, 2008

Yukio Okamoto, international affairs advisor

The year 1960 was called the year of Africa, but since then until recently, Africa had been left behind. Now again, Africa has grabbed the spotlight for two notable reasons.

First, there is the negative aspect of it being a civilization that has become a nest for terrorism and AIDS. Second, Africa has become an important continent in terms of its economic aspects. The continent has moved remarkably into the international spotlight

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because of its natural resources. With rapid economic growth in such emerging countries as China and India, the demand for natural resources across the world has been rising.

Chinese President Hu Jintao has already traveled to 14 African countries and Premier Wen Jiabao has visited eight African countries over the past few years. Japan has embassies in 27 African countries, but China has 47 embassies. China aims to secure oil and mineral resources in Africa. China hosted the China-Africa Cooperation Forum in Beijing in 2006. In the meeting, China declared it would establish a development fund by investing \$5 billion in it.

Of China's overseas aid to other countries of the world, more than 40 PERCENT has been directed toward Africa. Africa has become a strategic target for China.

The problem about China's moves is that the country spreads money around freely and without being fettered by any rules set by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which are applied to the industrialized countries. All China wants is to do is secure resources. China doesn't care to whom they grant money: human rights violators or dictators.

Meanwhile, Japan is an honest aid provider, but regrettably, the amount of aid provided by Japan is very small. Japan's economic cooperation budget has been trimmed every year in the course of budget examination. As a result, the current budget is a 40 PERCENT decrease from a decade ago because during that timeframe, the aid budget has been cut across the board in line with the principles for economic and fiscal management and structural reform concerning budget compilation. The budget for economic cooperation is now merely 1.5 PERCENT of the general budget. It is possible to handle that budget as an exceptional case from budget cuts if a political decision is made to do so. ODA is a kind of world tax for Japan to survive in the world.

China has decided to donate a huge building to be used as the headquarters of the African Union (AU). This donation has gained publicity not only in Ethiopia, where the AU headquarters is located, but also all over Africa. All Japan can do about that is just watch.

Japan is to host the 4th round of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in Yokohama City. The session is to kick off on May 28. It is expected to be joined by representatives from 53 African countries. Of them, more than 40 countries will send their top leaders. This will be an unprecedented gathering of so many top leaders from Africa, but Japan has yet to gain momentum as a host country. One reason seems to lie in the fact that under the current public relations budget of the Japanese government, it is not allowed to create anything but a limited number of brochures and posters on the upcoming TICAD.

Drastic changes in relations between countries and economic competition are gaining impetus across the world. Africa's population exceeds 900 million persons. It was unlikely in the past that destitute areas with an overcrowded population would grow economically, but now an overcrowded region is growing. Africa's economic growth rates are higher than those of the Group of Eight industrialized countries. Africa's economy is about to take off. Japan has succeeded in having more than 40 top leaders from Africa join the TICAD meeting. This is great. I praise the Japanese government's efforts in this regard. Africa relies on Japan. Africa

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has begun to walk on its own. This is to be noted.

SCHIEFFER